

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 08595 01 OF 02 091359Z
ACTION ARA-15

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
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INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
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AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH
AMCONSUL CALI POUCH
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 8595

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CO, ELAB
SUBJECT: POLITICAL SUMMARIES: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. THE TURBAY CABINET PROMULGATED A LONG AWAITED SECURITY STATUTE DRASTICALLY INCREASING PENALTIES FOR KIDNAPPING, TERRORISM, GUERRILLA ACTIVITY AND OTHER SUBVERSIVE VIOLENCE. PLITICIANS AND FACTIONS WITHIN THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES CONTINUED SQUABBLING OVER PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL APPOINTMENTS AS PRESIDENT TURBAY URGED CONCILIATION. TURBAY DECIDED THAT THE ATTORNEY GENERAL SHOULD BE A LIBERAL, AND SUBMITTED THE NAMES OF THREE LIBERALS FOR THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES TO CHOOSE AMONG; CONSERVATIVE SPOKESMAN CRITICIED THE PRESIDENT'S FAILURE TO INCLUDE ONE OF THEIR OWN. LIBERAL PARLIAMENTARIANS WENT ON RECORD IN FAVOR OF THE OVERTHROW OF SOMOZW AND INSTALLATION OF DEMOCRACY IN NICARAGUA. AUGUST STATISTICS SHOWED
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 08595 01 OF 02 091359Z

THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS MEETING WITH SOME SUCCESS IN SLOWING DOWN INFLATION. DEMOCRATIC LABOR LEADERS HAVE CAUTIOUSLY SUPPORTED TURBAY'S SECURITY STATUTE PUBLICLY AND HAVE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT HE WILL HELP THAM AGAINST THE COMMUNIST TRADE UNIONS AND IN OBTAINING GAINS FOR THE WORKERS. URBAN AND RURAL TERRORISM CONTINUED EVEN AS THE NEW SECURITY STATUTE WAS PROMULGATED.

END SUMMARY.

2. GOC PROMULGATES TOUGH NEW SECURITY STATUTE. ON SEPTEMBER 6, THE GOC PROMULGATED A NEW SECURITY STATUTE, SETTING FORTH VARIOUS MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE COUNTRY'S INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEM. HEIGHTENED PENALTIES WERE PROVIDED FOR SUCH CRIMES AS KIDNAPPING AND EXTORTION, AS WELL AS FOR SUBVERSIVE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN, HOWEVER, EMPHASIZED THE GOC'S DEDICATION TO THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DECLARED THAT THE STATUTE WOULD NOT IMPAIR THE RIGHTS OR SOCIAL GUARANTEES ENJOYED BY THE COLOMBIAN PEOPLE. (FOR FURTHER DETAILS, SEE BOGOTA 8536).

3. FACTIONS AND INDIVIDUAL LEADERS IN THE TWO PARTIES CONTINUE TO SQUABBLE OVER APPOINTMENTS. DURING THE PAST WEEK, LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE FACTIONS AND POLITICIANS CONTINUED TO SQUABBLE OVER APPOINTMENTS IN VARIOUS DEPARTMENTAL (PROVINCIAL) ADMINISTRATIONS, WHILE THREE LEADING LIBERALS JOCKEYED FOR ELECTION AS "DESIGNADO" (COLOMBIA'S NEAREST EQUIVALENT TO VICE PRESIDENT). PRESIDENT TURBAY REMAINED CAREFULLY NEUTRAL WHILE PRESSING THE WARRING FACTIONS AND POLITICIANS TO COMPROMISE THEIR DIFFERENCES AMICABLE WITHIN THE BI-PARTISAN "NATIONAL" FRAMEWORK OF HIS GOVERNMENT. MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT GERMAN ZEA HERNANDEZ APPEARED IN CONGRESS SEPTEMBER 5 TO DEFEND THE NOMINATION OF CONSERVATIVE GOVERNOR GUILLERMO OCAMPO OSPINA OF CALDAS AGAINST ATTACK FROM THE RIVAL CONSERVATIVE FACTION, AND

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 08595 01 OF 02 091359Z

TO REPORT THAT HE HAD INSTRUCTED GOVERNORS TO RESOLVE LOCAL POLITICAL CONTROVERSIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH PRESIDENT TURBAY'S GUIDELINES FOR "ADEQUATE AND EQUITABLE" PARTICIPATION FOR THE VARIOUS LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE CURRENTS. REPORTEDLY, THE LIBERAL GOVERNOR OF CHOCOLUZA COLOMBIA DE GONZALEZ, RESOLVED HER DIFFERENCES WITH HER LOCAL LIBERAL RIVALS, AND THE SQUABBLES IN SEVERAL OTHER DEPARTMENTS WERE CLOSE TO SOLUTION. THREE PROMINENT TURBAY SUPPORTERS ARE CONTENDING FOR ELECTION AS "DESIGNADO". IGNORING TRADITION, THE PRESIDENT INDICATED THAT HE WOULD NOT SELECT THE "DESIGNADO" HIMSELF AND ASKED THE LIBERAL SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES TO CHOOSE A SOLE LIBERAL CANDIDATE FOR ELECTION BY THE CONGRESS. HE ASKED, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE OUTGOING "DESIGNADO", FOREIGN MINISTER INDALECIO LIEVANO, IS ELECTED UNGA PRESIDENT SEPTEMBER 19. ON SEPTEMBER 5, SENATOR CARLOS HOLMES TRUJILLO INTRODUCED A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO CREATE THE POST OF VICE PRESIDENT AND PROVIDE FOR DIRECT NATIONAL ELECTION OF SUCH AN OFFICIAL BEGINNING IN 1982. PRESIDENT TURBAY SPOKE OUT AGAINST HOLMES' PROPOSAL THE NEXT DAY, HOWEVER. COMMENT: AS A FORMER TOP AIDE TO FORMER PRESIDENT PASTRANA RECENTLY OBSERVED TO POLITICAL COUNSELOR, THE TURBAY ADMINISTRATION MAY HAVE LOST A PRECIOUS MONTH IN

GETTING ITS PROGRAMS UNDERWAY DUE TO TURBAY'S CAUTIOUS POLICY OF WAITING FOR THE VARIOUS FACTIONS AND POLITICIANS TO CONCILIATE THEIR DIFFERENCES OVER APPOINTMENTS. IF SUCCESSFUL, HOWEVER, TURBAY MAY BE ABLE TO PRESSURE THE AURA OF GOOD FEELING HE HAS CREATED AND AVOID THE DIVISIVE SQUABBLING THAT MARRED THE END OF THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, SOME CONSERVATIVES ALREADY ENVISAGE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEIR PARTY WILL WITHDRAW FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT AT SOME TIME IN THE NO-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE.

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 08595 02 OF 02 091421Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 8595

4. PRESIDENT NOMINATES THREE FOR APPOINTMENT AS ATTORNEY GENERAL. ON SEPTEMBER 7, PRESIDENT TURBAY SENT TO THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES A LIST OF THREE NAMES FROM WHICH THE CHAMBER WILL SELECT ONE TO BE ATTORNEY GENERAL. THE THREE ARE GUILLERMO GONZALEZ CHARRY, SAMUEL ARANGO REYES, AND HERNANDO CASTILLA SAMPER, ALL LIBERALS. THE FIRST TWO ARE MEMEBERS OF THE SUPREME COURT; THE THIRD, ALSO A LAWYER, IS A MEMBER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY GOVERNING BOARD. UPON RECEIPT OF THE LIST, THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER, JORGE MARIO EASTMAN, ANNOUNCED THAT THE ELECTION WOULD TAKE PLACE ON SEPTEMBER 19. SPOKESMAN FOR BOTH FACTIONS OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CRITICIZED THE PRESIDENT FOR NOT INCLUDING A CONSERVATIVE

IN THE LIST. ALBERTO CASAS SANTAMARIA OF THE ALVARISTA WING OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY EVEN URGED THAT CONSERVATIVE REPRESENTATIVES ABSTAIN FROM VOTING ON THE SELECTION OF THE ATTORNEY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 08595 02 OF 02 091421Z

GENERAL. COMMENT: THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PRESIDENCY, ALVARO PEREZ VIVES, HAS ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR PRIVATELY THAT ANY ONE OF THE THREE WILL BE AT LEAST AS EFFECTIVE AN ATTORNEY GENERAL AS THE INCUMBENT.

5. LIBERAL PARLIAMENTARY CALL FOR OVERTHROW OF SOMOZA. ON SEPTEMBER 5, "ACTING IN REPRESENTATION OF COLOMBIA'S MAJORITIES AFFILIATED TO THE LIBERAL PARTY," NEARLY ALL LIBERAL REPRESENTATIVES IN THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES SIGNED A DECLARATION WISHING THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE SUCCESS IN OVERTHROWING THE "SOMOZA TYRANNY". THEY CALLED FOR AN END TO "THE VIOLENCE AND CRIMINAL REPRESSION EXERCISED BY THE TYRANNY" AND "CELEBRATED THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE'S DECISION TO CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE" WHICH THEY WERE CONFIDENT WOULD LEAD PROMPTLY TO "THE INSTALLATION OF A NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM BASED ON LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND AMPLE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION." AMONG THE SIGNERS WERE CHAMBER PRESIDENT JORGE MARIO EASTMAN AND SECOND VICE PRESIDENT ADALBERTO OVALLE MUNOZ. COMMENT: WITH THEIR LONG HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC REGIMES, AND THE SOMOZA DICTATORSHIP IS VIEWED HERE AS ESPECIALLY REPUGNANT.

6. INFLATION SLOWS DOWN. ON SEPTEMBER 4, THE NATIONAL STATISTICS BUREAU, DANE, RELEASED STATISTICS SHOWING THAT GOC EFFORTS TO CONTROL INFLATION ENJOYED A MEASURE OF SUCCESS IN AUGUST. THE AUGUST BLUE COLLAR WORKER COST-OF-LIVING INDEX REMAINED UNCHANGED FROM JULY. THE JANUARY-THROUGH-AUGUST INFLATION RATE WAS 12.2 PERCENT IN 1978, COMPARED TO 29.4 PERCENT IN 1977. COMMENT: EXCELLENT WEATHER AND BUMPER CROPS, ALONG WITH RESTRICTIVE GOC MONETARY POLICY, HAVE PLAYED MAJOR ROLES IN LIMITING INFLATION, WHICH IS RUNNING AT A SEASONALLY-ADJUSTED ANNUAL RATE OF 16.2 PERCENT THUS FAR IN 1978 (VERSUS THE FINAL 1977 RATE OF 34.2 PERCENT). BARRING
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BOGOTA 08595 02 OF 02 091421Z

UNFAVORABLE DEVELOPMENTS NOT NOW FORESEEN, THE GOC SHOULD BE ABLE TO MEET ITS TARGET OF HOLDING INFLATION TO 20 PERCENT OR LESS IN 1978.

7. DEMOCRATIC LABOR REACTS CAUTIOUSLY BUT POSITIVELY TO MEETINGS WITH TURBAY, AND TO SECURITY STATUTE. TULIO

CUEVAS, LEADER OF COLOMBIA'S LARGEST LABOR CONFEDERATION, THE UTC, MET PRIVATELY WITH PRESIDENT TURBAY SEPTEMBER 1, BEFORE TURBAY'S SEPTEMBER 4 MEETING WITH UTC'S EXECUTIVE BOARD. DURING A SUBSEQUENT CONVERSTATION WITH EMBASSY LABOR ATTACHE, CUEVAS PRAISED TURBAY'S SAVVY, IF SLOW-MOVING, POLITICAL TECHNIQUE OF CAREFULLY SEEKING CONSENSUS BEHIND THE SCENES BEFORE OFFICIAL MEETINGS, THUS AVOIDING UNPLANNED CONFRONTATIONS. HE ALSO PRAISED TURBAY'S APPROACH TO THE SECURITY PROBLEM, INDICATING HE THOUGHT TURBAY WOULD CLAMP DOWN ON UNREST AND SUBVERSION AND STABILIZE THE SITUATION PREVIOUS PRESIDENTS HAD LET GET OUT OF HAND. CUEVAS FELT THE PRESIDENT INTENDED TO MAKE THINGS DIFFICULT FOR THE COMMUNIST UNIONS AND GIVE SUPPORT TO THE DEMOCRATIC LABOR ORGANIZATIONS BY BEING, AND URGING PRIVATE BUSINESS TO BE, FORTHCOMING IN REGARD TO THE REFORMS, INCREASED EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME IMPROVEMENTS SOUGHT BY DEMOCRATIC LABOR. CUEVAS WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT TURBAY, DURING HIS VISIT AND ADDRESS TO THE CONVENTION OF THE INDUSTRIALISTS' ASSOCIATION (ANDI) IN CARTAGENA LATER THIS WEEK, WOULD WORK TO ESTABLISH A LABOR-MANAGEMENT CONSENSUS FOR REFORM. PUBLICLY, CUEVAS WAS POSITIVE BUT CAUTIOUS ABOUT THE NEW SECURITY STATUTE RESERVING JUDGEMENT ABOUT ITS EFFECTS ON LABOR (IT PENALIZES ILLEGAL STOPPAGES BY PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, OBSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC THOROUGHFARES, ETC.). UTC VICE PRESIDENT ALVARO RAMIREZ WAS MORE OUTSPOKENLY POSITIVE. CTC VICE PRESIDENT WILLIAM SALAZAR AND SECRETARY GENERAL APECIDES ALVIS WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORTED THE STATUTE'S ATTACK ON CRIME, UNREST AND SUBVERSION, BUT EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE PROVISIONS AFFECTING LABOR PENDING CAREFUL STUDY. CTC LEADERS MET WITH TURBAY SEPTEMBER 5 AND INDICATIONS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BOGOTA 08595 02 OF 02 091421Z

THAT THEIR MEETING ALSO WENT WELL. THE OTHER TWO LABOR CENTRALS IN THE NATIONAL TRADE UNION COUNCIL (CNS), THE COMMUNIST CSTC AND THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN CGT, SHARPLY CRITICED THE SECURITY STATUTE AS INEFFECTIVE AGAINST CRIME, BUT DRAS- TICALLY REPRESSIVE POLITICALLY AND AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF TRADE UNIONS AND OTHER "POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS". COMMENT: IF TURBAY IS ABLE TO DELIVER SOME IMPROVEMENTS FOR WOKERS AND TO LIMIT ANY REPRESSION IN THE LABOR AREA TO ILLEGAL COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES, HE COULD HELP THE UTC AND CTC AT CSTC EXPENSE AND MIGHT EVEN EVENTUALLY BRING ABOUT THE BREAK-UP OF THE CNS.

8. URBAN AND RURAL TERRORIST ACTIONS CONTINUE. UNDETERRED BY ADVANCE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S TOUGH NEW SECURITY STATUTE, BOTH URBAN AND RURAL TERRORIST GROUPS CONTINUED ACTIVE FURING THE WEEK. IN BOGOTA TWO TERRORIST GROUPS ACTED SEPARATELY TO SUPPORT THE TWO-MONTH-OLD STRIKE BY THE COMMUNIST UNION AT CROYDON (UNIROYAL). THE NEWLY FORMED "AUTODEFENSA OBRERA" GROUP

FIREBOMBED A CROYDON RETAIL OUTLET SEPTEMBER 8, AND THE "M-19" GROUP HIJACKED A SUPERMARKET TRUCK AND DISTRIBUTED ITS CONTENTS TO THE STRIKERS. M-19 ALSO THREATENED TO PUBLISH ALLEGEDLY EMBARRASSING COMPANY DOCUMENTS IT STOLE IS A RAID ON CROYDON OFFICES. IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, FARC, THE GUERRILLA ARM OF THE PRO-SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY (PCC) ATTACKED A POLICE STATION IN SOUTHERN COLOMBIA, AND ALSO KILLED THREE MORE COMPESINOS IN THE CENTRAL MAGDALENA VALLEY, BRINGING TO MORE THAN FORTY ITS MURDERS IN THE LATTER AREA THIS YEAR. MEANWHILE, BOGOTA NEWSPAPERS CONTINUED TO REPORT ON THE ARMY'S CREATION OF A NEW, SPECIALIZED, ANTI-GUERRILLA BATTALION TO REESTABLISH SECURITY, ESPECIALLY IN THE TROUBLED EL PATO AREA NEAR NEIVA AND CIMITARRA IN THE CENTRAL MAGDALENA. COMMENT: THE CONTINUED TERRORIST ACTIVITY DEMONSTRATES THAT REAL ENFORCEMENT AND NOT JUST PROMULGATION OF

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PAGE 05 BOGOTA 08595 02 OF 02 091421Z

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